

GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE'S HORSE SUPPLY,  
1862-1865

ALTHOUGH it has long been an axiom that the effectiveness of an army depends upon its mobility and its food supply as well as upon its discipline, technical training, and the skill of its officers, it is a strange fact that the numerous histories of the military operations of General Lee have paid but little attention to his constant worries over food supply and practically none at all to his equally difficult and equally important problem of maintaining mobility. These two subjects are so closely interrelated that it is impossible to separate them; but the present study, for the sake of brevity, will deal primarily with one factor in the problem of movement, namely, Lee's supply of horses and mules and his facilities for keeping them in condition for service. It is hoped that the examination of this subject will throw some new light upon Lee's operations, especially during the last two years of the campaigns in Virginia.

The census of 1860 indicates that there was a normal supply of horses and mules in the Confederate States at the beginning of the war; but the lower South was not a horse-breeding country, although a few fine horses for saddle or racing purposes were raised there. The great horse-breeding region was in Kentucky, Tennessee, and western Virginia, and the planters generally bought their horses and mules from those states. In the principal cotton states, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, there were nearly as many mules as horses, while in Louisiana there were more. In Texas there was a large surplus of horses, but they were mostly of the small "mustang" breed and not well adapted either to draft purposes or to cavalry use. Oxen were widely used throughout the South, especially on the small farms.

In order to understand the situation after hostilities began it is necessary to note the method of procuring and subsisting horses for the Confederate armies. Under an act of the Provisional Congress, March 6, 1861, each mounted volunteer was to furnish his own horse and horse equipment, for which he was to receive forty cents a day and pay for the horse if it should be killed in action. This provision, adopted partly in the interest of economy and partly in the belief that the men would furnish better mounts than the government and that they would take better care of their own property, was later the cause of much difficulty in procuring remounts for the cavalry in Virginia.

Mounted officers also furnished their own horses. All other army horses, that is, those for artillery and baggage trains, were to be provided by the quartermaster's department. This department, or bureau, had charge of all army transportation and of furnishing grain and "long forage" (*i.e.*, hay and fodder) for all animals, including those of the cavalry. Horses were used, then, for three purposes: for cavalry and mounted officers, for artillery, and for post and field transportation. Mules also were used in the transportation service, but they were not favored for cavalry or artillery.

Because of the long distances from the lower states to the Virginia front, and also because of the overloaded condition of the railroads, the quartermaster general at first preferred to buy the horses for artillery and field transportation service in Virginia either in that state or in North Carolina. Most of them were obtained in the Shenandoah Valley or in southwestern Virginia. Cavalry regiments that were organized and mounted in other states were generally marched to Virginia. There was no marked difficulty in procuring horses and mules in 1861, but by the summer of 1862 the situation had changed. The loss of Missouri, Kentucky, western and middle Tennessee, and trans-Allegheny Virginia had cut off the great reservoir of the better grade of horses, while the depreciation of Confederate currency in the spring, after the retreat of Albert Sidney Johnston's army into Mississippi, had sent prices up to unprecedented heights. Early in June the quartermaster general, whose department evidently was not yet well organized, complained that it taxed his exertions and the resources of the country to provide horses for both the transportation and the artillery and to obtain forage for them, and suggested that the number of artillery companies should not be increased.<sup>1</sup>

That astonishing series of operations during the summer of 1862, by which Lee threw the Union armies out of Virginia, had the effect of saving the grain crop to the Confederates. The army became less dependent upon the railroads for food and forage and, except for short intervals, was well supplied until winter came on; but because of the constant service and extraordinary exertions required of them the horses were badly worn down by the end of September, when their food was becoming scarce. The attentive care which Lee always gave to the horses of his army is noticeable throughout this first of his great campaigns.<sup>2</sup> Losses of artillery and cavalry horses.

<sup>1</sup> Quartermaster General's Letter-Book, I. 362, *et passim*, Confederate Archives, Adjutant General's Office, U. S. War Department. A. C. Myers to G. W. Randolph, secretary of war, June 5, 1862, *ibid.*, IV. 267.

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, Sept. 28, Oct. 1, 1862, U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. I. vol. XIX., pt. 2, pp. 633, 642-643.

necessarily much exposed in battle, had been severe. With great difficulty the artillery was refurnished with horses; but the problem of remounting the cavalry was harder. Under the law the men must furnish their own mounts. They were to be paid only for horses lost in battle and then only at the value appraised when mustered into service. This allowance was now insufficient, because of the depreciation of the currency, to enable them to buy new ones. Even Virginians who were near home had great difficulty in procuring horses because of the high prices. Men from distant states found it almost impossible to remount themselves. To make matters worse, the horses of Stuart's cavalry had contracted diseases known as "sore tongue" and "greased heel" or "soft hoof" which rendered many of them unfit for use.<sup>3</sup> So many men were dismounted that Lee sought to transfer them to the infantry and to replace them with infantrymen who could procure horses. His cavalry was so greatly weakened that he was unable to operate effectively against McClellan's flank when the latter crossed into Virginia east of the Blue Ridge late in October. The only means which the secretary of war could suggest for strengthening the cavalry was to purchase one thousand horses in Texas, bring them all the way to Virginia and sell them to the dismounted men at cost.<sup>4</sup> This suggestion, however, was not carried out.

As the winter of 1862-1863 came on, the difficulty of getting supplies to the Army of Northern Virginia caused Lee great anxiety. Burnside's thrust at Fredericksburg forced him to concentrate his army and thus to decrease his range for foraging and increase his dependence upon the feeble railroads. The immediate countryside was soon exhausted, and wagons were sent as far as seventy miles away for forage. But the quartermasters' teams were too weak to haul heavy loads so far over bad roads. Sometimes heavy rains or extremely cold weather stopped them altogether. Long distances, light loads, and a growing scarcity of teams and wagons kept the stock of supplies at a dangerously low level. The railroads were doing but little better, for they were delivering only about one-sixth of the ration of hay and not even that much with regularity.<sup>5</sup> By February

<sup>3</sup> R. E. Lee to G. W. Randolph, Nov. 10, 1862, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XIX., pt. 2, p. 709; Heros von Borcke, *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence*, pp. 326, 343-344; J. S. Wise, *The Long Arm of Lee*, I. 348. McClellan's cavalry horses were also attacked by these diseases; see, e.g., John Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War*, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> G. W. Randolph to Lee, Nov. 14, 1862, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XIX., pt. 2, p. 716.

<sup>5</sup> R. E. Lee to T. J. Jackson, Feb. 7, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. LI., pt. 2, pp. 678-679. "Send Hay as fast as possible. . . . The animals here are dying for

food was so scarce for both men and animals that Lee was compelled to scatter his army in order to feed it. Artillery horses were sent as far away as was safe—some towards the James and others to the lower Rappahannock; part of the cavalry was moved to Page County in the Shenandoah Valley; and, most important of all, about half of Longstreet's corps was sent south of the lower James for the double purpose of checking the Federals at Norfolk and Suffolk and of getting out supplies. Lee took the chance that Burnside would remain inactive, for the bad weather that cut down his own supplies likewise made it difficult for his antagonist to move. There is evidence that, but for the condition of the roads and streams and the lack of food, Lee himself would have assumed the offensive; for he wrote Jefferson Davis in the middle of February expressing regret that the situation did not admit of attack. The rivers and streams were swollen and without bridges; the roads were impassable; and, he added: "Our horses and mules are in that reduced state that the labor and exposure incident to an attack would result in their destruction, and leave us destitute of the means of transportation."<sup>6</sup>

With the approach of spring and the renewal of active operations Lee gave close attention to his horses. Despite the greatest care, many of them had died during the winter. The quartermaster general was called upon for horses to fill the gaps in the artillery, and every effort was made to help the dismounted cavalymen to procure mounts. But it was almost a hopeless task. In March, because of "the difficulty of procuring animals and forage, and from the increased demand for transportation and subsistence", Lee ordered a reduction in the transportation of the army—that is, of wagons and teams for the several headquarters and for medical, quartermaster, and other services—to the lowest possible limit. The reorganization of the artillery, and especially the introduction of heavier guns, made heavier draft horses necessary and they were very hard to find. When requested by General Wade Hampton to increase the number of batteries of horse artillery for service with the cavalry, Lee replied that it was impossible on account of the difficulty of procuring horses. While Hooker was preparing in April to take the offensive, Lee, with Longstreet still absent below the James, was forced to remain immobile because of the condition of his horses and the scarcity of food want of forage and none can be obtained in the country round about." W. H. Kirker, Milford Depot, to G. G. Thompson, Hanover Junction, Feb. 27, 1863, Papers of George G. Thompson (in Library of Congress). Kirker was assistant quartermaster.

<sup>6</sup> *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXV., pt. 2, pp. 509, 604, 627, 632; Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Confidential Dispatches to Davis*, pp. 71-72.

and forage.<sup>7</sup> The weakness of his cavalry was especially trying, for the Federal cavalry had been heavily reenforced and was beginning to ride over the smaller Confederate units by sheer weight of numbers. This was ominous; for it should be remembered that hitherto the cavalry of Stuart had been superior in fighting power to that of the Federals. The better remount facilities of the Northern army were beginning to tell, and had Hooker known how to use his cavalry at this juncture he might have inflicted disaster upon Lee. On April 20 Lee again ordered a reduction in the scanty transportation of his army. A few days later he wrote to his chief of artillery, General Pendleton, "The destruction of horses in the army is so great that I fear it will be impossible to supply our wants. There are not enough in the country".<sup>8</sup>

General Lee's statement that there were not enough horses in the country for army use after only one year of active warfare may seem surprising; but as he was never given to exaggeration the statement deserves consideration. By "the country" he may have meant Virginia or the region from which his own army normally drew its animals; and he evidently had in mind also the surplus of horses above the minimum requirements of the farmers.<sup>9</sup> Lee, who seemed to

<sup>7</sup> "General Orders, no. 43", Mar. 21, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXV., pt. 2, p. 681; W. N. Pendleton to A. H. Cole, Mar. 31, *ibid.*, p. 695; Lee to Hampton, Mar. 31, *ibid.*, p. 694; Lee to Davis, Apr. 16, *ibid.*, p. 725. In early April, 1863, when the stock of food in Richmond was nearly exhausted, the quartermaster general was unable to supply wagons and teams with which to haul 67,000 bushels of wheat from Essex County on the lower Rappahannock. L. B. Northrop to A. C. Myers, and Myers to Northrop, Apr. 3, 4, 8, 16, 1863, Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received", Confederate Archives.

On April 17, 1863, Edmund Ruffin noted in his diary that good hay cost \$25 per 100 pounds in Richmond, and added: "It seems to me that our country & cause are now, for the first time during the war, in great peril of defeat—and not from the enemy's arms, but from the scarcity & high prices of provisions, & the impossibility of the government feeding the horses of the army, which is even much more difficult than to feed & support the men. In the cavalry brigade to which my grandson belongs, the horses have rarely had any feed but corn for some months—and are generally without any hay or other long provender, & for weeks together. Horses cannot live on grain alone, even if plentifully supplied with it. As might be expected, the horses are reduced very low in flesh & strength, & many are dying, & more failing entirely. I do not know, but infer that this brigade is not worse supplied than all others of our cavalry in eastern Virginia. And if so, the cavalry and the wagon & artillery teams cannot be capable of performing hard or even moderate service. . . ." *Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, IX. 1623. MSS. Div., Library of Congress. For this and later citations to this diary I am under obligations to Professor Avery O. Craven, who called my attention to them.

<sup>8</sup> *Offic. Rec.* ser. I. v. XXV., pt. 2, pp. 739, 740-741, 749.

<sup>9</sup> "The waste & destruction of horses in our cavalry service are enormous—and enough to destroy the efficiency of that branch of the army, as well as to increase both public and private expenses beyond all calculation for new supplies of horses.

consider everything, insisted at all times that the farmers be hindered as little as possible in the production of crops because, if for no other reason, his army must be fed largely from Virginia. He had already seen that, because of their weak condition, he could not depend upon the railroads for sufficient supplies from the lower South;<sup>10</sup> besides, the other armies must now draw upon that region. Without teams the Virginia farmers could neither plant nor harvest. It had not taken long to draw off their small surplus of horses and mules; and future levies upon their teams—inevitable, because of the heavy destruction of the animals with the army—must result in a decrease in the production of the food and forage by means of which the army existed and moved. Horses were still to be procured in Virginia, at a heavy cost to agriculture; but Lee was never again adequately supplied with them.

After Chancellorsville, Lee was forced to remain immobile for more than a month, partly because he needed time for the reorganization of his army after the death of Stonewall Jackson, but partly also because of the condition of his horses.<sup>11</sup> The artillery horses were again sent away to be foraged; heavy horses were transferred from the transport service to the guns and replaced by mules; new ones were brought up by the quartermasters. The cavalry was still in bad condition. More than one-fourth of Stuart's men were without mounts, while nearly all the horses in service were poor and weak. The cavalry was given as much rest as the safety of the army would allow, and as spring grass and clover came on the animals began to mend. Lee was greatly cheered in the last days of May by the capture of some 1200 to 1500 horses during a raid on the upper Potomac by Generals W. E. Jones and Imboden; but even with this addition to his resources he was unable to provide sufficient teams for

It was one part of our general bad system of southern economy to raise very few horses, & to buy nearly all, & all our mules, from the western states. A change of this general system of buying to rearing animals, cannot be changed, even under favorable circumstances for obtaining breeders, &c. in less than three years—& the war, & the dangers of every farmer's stock made the circumstances very unfavorable for a change. Therefore there has been little increase in the breeding of horses & mules—the supply by purchases from abroad totally cut off—the waste, by want of food & great hardships & abuse, in our army, made us destructive—as can be conceived—& the raids & robberies of the enemy, in addition, have stripped much of the country of the before diminished & insufficient stock of horses & mules for agricultural labors. This alone is a very serious subject for gloomy anticipations. . . ." *Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, X. 1817-1818 (August 13, 1863).

<sup>10</sup> For a brief account of the condition of the railroads in the Confederacy see the *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XXII. 794-810.

<sup>11</sup> For a vivid description of the sufferings and losses of cavalry horses in both Federal and Confederate service see a letter from Charles Francis Adams, jr., to his mother, May 12, 1863, in *A Cycle of Adams Letters*, II., pp. 3-5.

the medical wagons, ambulances, and ammunition trains, and was apprehensive that he must reduce the artillery.<sup>12</sup> But he proceeded, nevertheless, to manoeuvre Hooker out of Virginia into Maryland, and to take his own army into Pennsylvania.

As Lee moved north towards Gettysburg, the Federals endeavored to remove all horses from his reach; but he obtained some, though evidently not enough to replace those killed or worn out and left behind. When he was back in Virginia in the latter part of July, straining every resource to recover from that disastrous expedition, he again gave anxious consideration to the condition of his horses. All the animals were greatly weakened by the strain of the campaign. As the corn crop was not yet matured, grain was very difficult to get in northern Virginia; and the railroads could not deliver enough from the south. Fortunately, Meade crossed slowly into Virginia and kept out of striking distance east of the Blue Ridge, and Lee used the respite allowed him to send away to refreshment camps the horses that were utterly broken down.<sup>13</sup> But he was again reduced, practically, to immobility. On August 24, he wrote President Davis:

Nothing prevents my advancing now [against Meade] but the fear of killing our artillery horses. They are much reduced, and the hot weather and scarce forage keeps them so. The cavalry also suffer and I fear to set them at work. Some days we get a pound of corn per horse and some days more; some none. Our limit is five per day per horse. You can judge of our prospects. . . . Everything is being done by me that can be to recruit the horses. I have been obliged to diminish the number of guns in the artillery, and fear I shall have to lose more.<sup>14</sup>

In October, when the local corn crop was available and his horses were in somewhat better condition, Lee moved against Meade's right and forced him back to the line of Bull Run; but as the country thereabouts was bare of supplies he returned to the Rapidan.

As the difficulty of procuring fresh horses increased, greater attention was given to the care of those disabled. Hitherto, it seems, these animals had been turned over at stated intervals to quartermaster officers or agents, who distributed them on pastures under the care of subordinates. Here they received little attention and were left to recover or die. They were seldom properly inspected by veterinarians, and diseased horses were often placed with the others with the result that the disease spread. The new plan adopted in

<sup>12</sup> *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXV., pt. 2, pp. 808, 809, 820, 825.

<sup>13</sup> Lee to J. A. Seddon, secretary of war, Aug. 7, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, p. 628. Lee to Longstreet, July 19, 1863, and "General Orders, no. 25" [Stuart's], July 29, 1863, *ibid.*, ser. I. v. XXVII., pt. 3, pp. 1024, 1050.

<sup>14</sup> *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, pp. 664-665. The Federal ration of grain to horses was ten pounds per day, though it probably averaged about eight. *Cycle of Adams Letters*, II. 3.

the fall of 1863 seems to have originated with General W. N. Pendleton, Lee's chief of artillery. As the plan was worked out, the whole Confederacy was divided into four inspection districts for field transportation, under an inspector general at Richmond, Major A. H. Cole, who was on the staff of the quartermaster general. The First District, comprising Virginia and North Carolina, was placed under Major George Johnston.<sup>15</sup> The distinctive feature of the plan was the establishment of "horse infirmaries" under special officers. The infirmary headquarters for Virginia were placed at Lynchburg, under Major J. G. Paxton. As unserviceable horses and mules were withdrawn from the army, they were to be examined carefully, the diseased ones segregated, and the rest distributed under experienced caretakers in those counties about Lynchburg remote from army operations where feed and pasturage were most plentiful. The results of this system will be described later.

As the winter of 1863-1864 drew on, the perennial spectre of famine threatening men and animals again haunted Lee. Even with the army reduced by the absence of Longstreet's corps in Tennessee, the railroads were not bringing enough food. Moreover, large portions of the upper Virginia piedmont and the lower Valley were almost bare of grain and forage. The horses, overworked and underfed, were so poor they could hardly be used. In November, Meade threatened an advance across the Rappahannock—the route Grant took in May the next year—and Lee wrote Davis:

Should he move in that direction, I will endeavor to follow him and bring him to battle, but I do not see how I can do it without the greatest difficulty. The country through which he [we?] will have to pass is barren. We have no forage on hand and very little prospect of getting any from Richmond. I fear our horses will die in great numbers, and, in fact, I do not know how they will survive two or three days' march without food.<sup>16</sup>

Fortunately, Meade did not push forward in earnest and, after the affair of Mine Run, the two armies settled down in winter quarters.

In August, 1863, Brigadier General A. R. Lawton, of Georgia, had become chief of the quartermaster's department, and new vigor was soon evident in that important bureau of supplies. Though the railroads could not be strengthened, their transportation service was more diligently supervised and the supply of corn from the Carolinas and Georgia flowed somewhat more steadily to the Virginia depots and camps. But it was never enough. Lee was obliged to monopo-

<sup>15</sup> Pendleton to Lee, Aug. 13, 1863, and Pendleton to A. H. Cole, Sept. 3, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, pp. 643, 697. Order Book, Inspector of Field Transportation, Oct. 7, 1863, *et passim*, Confederate Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Lee to Davis, Nov. 12, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, p. 832.



lize the stocks of corn and forage near the Virginia railroads and the James River Canal; but this did not suffice and by December the horses were failing rapidly. To make the situation worse, the dreaded disease glanders appeared among them. The artillery horses were moved to fresh camps farther west. The cavalry, which must always be on the alert, was in a pitiful state.<sup>17</sup> So many of Wade Hampton's men were dismounted that he begged permission to move two brigades back to South Carolina to enable his men to procure new mounts—a proposal which Lee dared not adopt. When it was proposed that the cavalymen be mounted on government horses, Lee remarked that he did not see how the horses could be procured, since not enough could be had for the artillery and transportation. An undated memorandum, evidently prepared by some officer in the field transportation service about this time, also opposed the proposition on similar grounds with the additional argument that the volunteer could purchase a horse through a friend or neighbor when the government agent could not, and that the soldier would take better care of his own than of a government horse.<sup>18</sup>

The situation grew worse during the winter. On January 3, 1864, the commissary officer for Richmond reported that the entire stock of breadstuffs in that city had been exhausted and that no requisitions for Lee's army could be filled until the railroads from the south could increase their shipments.<sup>19</sup> Evidently the shipments were increased, but food remained scarce both in Richmond and in the camps. Worried over the scarcity of horses, Lee asked for fresh cavalry regiments said to be in South Carolina and Georgia, but did not get them. General J. E. B. Stuart pointed out that only well-to-do men could now buy horses for cavalry service. The heavy losses among cavalry horses are illustrated by a report of General Wade Hampton, on February 1, 1864, that although 2000 horses had been brought on to one of his brigades (Butler's) within the past year, besides many that had been captured, not 500 men could be

<sup>17</sup> *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, p. 835. On the difficulty of foraging the cavalry, see H. B. McClellan to Wade Hampton, Nov. 11, 1863, and Thos. L. Rosser to T. G. Barker, Nov. 14, 1863, *ibid.*, ser. I. v. LI., pt. 2, pp. 783, 786.

<sup>18</sup> Hampton to Lee, Dec. 7, 1863, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXIX., pt. 2, pp. 862-863. Lee to Davis, Nov. 29, *ibid.*, p. 853. Papers of Field Transportation Office, in Confederate Archives.

<sup>19</sup> "The reserve of flour and hard bread has been consumed, and the receipts of corn for the past week have been totally inadequate to our daily wants. The accumulations at Greensborough and Charlotte still remain unmoved, only fifty-four cars having arrived at Danville from Greensborough during a period of four days, while the wants of this Department alone demand the use of eighty cars for the same time." Maj. S. B. French to Col. L. B. Northrop, January 3, 1864. *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. LI., pt. 2, p. 808.

mounted. In February Federal cavalry was raiding with impunity in the vicinity of Richmond because the Confederate cavalry, without forage for the jaded horses, was unable to follow the raiders.<sup>20</sup>

Under these conditions Lee had no choice but to remain on the defensive. In January, Longstreet, then near Knoxville, had suggested that Lee move forward in March toward Washington, while he himself should advance into Kentucky. Lee replied:

. . . You know how exhausted the country is between here and the Potomac; there is nothing for man or horse. Everything must be carried. How is that to be done with weak transportation on roads in the condition we may expect in March? . . . After you get into Kentucky I suppose provisions can be obtained. But if saddles, etc. could be procured in time, where can the horses be? They cannot be obtained in this section of country, and, as far as my information extends, not in the Confederacy. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Even in the Shenandoah Valley the Confederate forces were unable to occupy the region north of Staunton because both the grain and the long forage there were exhausted. In April, Lee expressed a desire to strike boldly at the enemy on the Rappahannock; but both his artillery and cavalry horses were widely scattered for foraging and he could not bring them to the army because he could not feed them there. As spring opened, the horses were able to get some grass and clover, and they began to improve; but they were far from being in condition for the strenuous campaign that was impending. There was no grain in the country near the Rapidan; the railways could not bring a full supply; nor could the wagon trains haul enough from the depots to enable Lee to concentrate against the thrust which he knew Grant was preparing. At this critical time the ordnance bureau proposed to solve Lee's difficulty about artillery horses by taking away some of his artillery.<sup>22</sup>

When Grant crossed the Rapidan with his well-equipped army early in May, Lee gathered his forces as rapidly as possible and struck the Federal advance in the Wilderness. Until the last minute possible he had been obliged to keep his army scattered in order to feed it. In the campaigns which followed, around to the Richmond and Petersburg fronts, the loss of horses both from the casualties of battle

<sup>20</sup> Lee to Seddon, Jan. 23, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXXIII. 1118; also, inspection report of S. W. Melton to S. Cooper, Mar. 14, *ibid.*, v. LI., pt. 2, pp. 835-837; Stuart to S. Cooper, Jan. 28, *ibid.*, v. XXXIII. 1126; report of Hampton, *ibid.*, p. 1140; Hampton to Lee, Feb. 12, and Lee to Elzey, Feb. 18, *ibid.*, pp. 1152, 1185.

<sup>21</sup> A. L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee*, pp. 637-638.

<sup>22</sup> J. D. Imboden to J. A. Early, Feb. 22, 1864, Lee to Davis, April 15, and Lee to Bragg, April 16, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXXIII. 1194-1195, 1282-1283, 1285.

and from overwork was extraordinarily heavy. By the end of May many of the field batteries were practically out of service through lack of horses.<sup>23</sup> Although some fresh animals were obtained, the quartermaster general sent back a requisition for artillery horses with the suggestion "that the proportion of field artillery be reduced" because of "the great scarcity of animals throughout the Confederacy and the necessity of having enough for agricultural purposes".<sup>24</sup> But the cavalry, still dependent for remounts upon personal purchases by the men, was in worse plight. Not only had the losses been heavy and the replacements scanty, but the horses remaining were so badly broken down by hard riding and lack of forage that they were incapable of long marches.<sup>25</sup> Grant's cavalry, now under Sheridan, was active and aggressive as well as numerically superior. Wade

<sup>23</sup> Reports of John Esten Cooke to Pendleton, May 25 and 29, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXXVI., pt. 3, pp. 830, 847.

P. W. Alexander, army correspondent of the *Savannah Republican* and an unusually frank and reliable writer, wrote his paper on July 29, 1864: "Just after the battle of the Wilderness the railway lines in Lee's rear were cut by the enemy, and his animals reduced almost to starvation. The county of Spottsylvania is poor, and there was no grass for the horses, which suffered so much that it was with great difficulty they could draw the wagons and artillery when the army moved. Under these threatening circumstances, the people in that and the neighboring counties, who had already paid their tithes and been stripped of nearly everything they had, were applied to by the authorities to *loan* the Government all the corn and other supplies they could spare. The response was unanimous: The heroic men and women said Lee's brave army should have all that was necessary to carry them over the difficulty, even if they had to go without themselves. . . . Thus Lee's hands were held up until the great battles of Spottsylvania were fought. . . ." *Savannah Republican*, August 5, 1864. It is unnecessary to point out the hazards of an army which in such circumstances must rely upon such expedients.

<sup>24</sup> Endorsement of A. R. Lawton, June 28, 1864, Quartm. Gen.'s Office, "Letters Received and endorsements", v. XI., no. 158, Confederate Archives.

<sup>25</sup> On May 27, after noting down accounts of the burning of houses and barns, destruction of food supplies, and the stealing or killing of animals, etc., by Federal raiders, Edmund Ruffin penned this reflection: "If this policy of the enemy is permitted to proceed . . . & Grant will hold off from giving battle to any army opposed to him, the result must be the reduction of Richmond & of Va., not by arms, but by starvation of the country & destitution of our armies. . . . Our cavalry is almost worthless for fighting, because of the broken-down condition of a large proportion of the horses, & the inability to replace them from any surplus stock of the country, & the impossibility of providing half enough provender. Yet, the Yankees, by plundering, take every serviceable horse left for agricultural & private uses, & provide themselves abundantly with forage, even from the most destitute localities. . . ." *Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, XII. 2124. A month later he recorded the failure of Confederate cavalry to pursue some Federal raiders and commented: "This is regularly the case in all raids of the enemy. They, by stealing fresh horses, & other facilities, are able to keep better mounted, & their horses better fed, & cannot often be overtaken, or matched in battle, by our cavalry, on half-starved & failing horses. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 2178.

Hampton, worthy successor to the lamented "Jeb" Stuart, was taxed to the uttermost to ward off Sheridan's thrusts at Lee's lines of communications.

Although Lee had gained some advantages by the removal to the new front on the Richmond-Petersburg line, they did not fully compensate him for the new difficulties which he now had to face. He had shortened his railway connection with the Carolinas and Georgia, whence most of his supplies must come; and the region immediately south and west of Richmond was not so completely denuded of food-stuffs as was that near the Rapidan. But because of the long line of works he was obliged to defend with his relatively small army, he could not attack Grant and was deprived of any favorable opportunity for offensive manoeuver. He did not fear a frontal attack; but he was fully aware of the danger to his railway communications on his flanks. He must depend upon his cavalry to guard, on the one side, the Virginia Central Railroad, lest his communications with the Shenandoah Valley be broken, and on the other, the Petersburg and Weldon road, which connected him with the seaboard of the Carolinas. This last was the most efficient of all the roads which carried supplies to his army, but it was also the most exposed to attack. The South-side Railroad, running west from Petersburg to Lynchburg, and the Richmond and Danville were better protected, but they were both "neighborhood" railroads and were too weak to stand heavy traffic.<sup>26</sup> The Richmond and Danville had recently been connected with western North Carolina by means of the newly built Piedmont Railroad (Greensboro to Danville); but so frail was the Piedmont, a badly constructed narrow gauge, that it could bring to Danville only small shipments, which had to be reloaded for forwarding to Richmond. Every heavy rain washed out track or bridges, and it was necessary to put on wagon-trains between Greensboro and Danville to supplement the efforts of the little railroad. If Grant should break his southern communications, Lee would be forced out of Richmond and must move back toward the piedmont region of North Carolina. But Richmond was the only railroad center of strategic importance north of Columbia, South Carolina, and the loss of its foundries, shops, factories, and supply depots would be disastrous, to say nothing of the effect which the loss of the capital must have upon public morale. Moreover, it was a question whether, with his transportation facilities so weak, he could withdraw successfully.

Grant, of course, saw the situation just as clearly as Lee. Early in June, even before he had touched the James, he ordered Hunter up from western Virginia to attack Lynchburg and sent Sheridan with a

<sup>26</sup> A. R. Lawton to Lee, June 23, 1864, *Quartm. Gen.'s Letter Book*, VIII. 302.

heavy force of cavalry to strike the Virginia Central and coöperate with Hunter. If successful, they would break Lee's western and northwestern communications. Hunter was repulsed; and Sheridan was checked at Trevilian's Station by Wade Hampton. Late in June, with his base firmly established on the James and a secure line of communication by water, Grant sent Wilson on another raid south of Petersburg across the Weldon road and against the Southside and Danville lines. Though he was severely handled, Wilson did some damage. A few days later, July 5, Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis that the numerical superiority of the enemy's cavalry caused him serious apprehensions about the safety of his southern communications, and that if these were lost he "need not point out the consequences". He did not know where any reënforcements could be had, but suggested that horses might be brought from Texas by swimming the Mississippi, and that others might be obtained from within the enemy's lines in western and northwestern Virginia by bartering cotton and tobacco for them. Upon "obtaining an increase of our supply of horses, and recruiting our cavalry . . . I believe, depends the issue of the campaign in Va." <sup>27</sup> Nothing could be more significant than this statement, with the proposal to get the needed horses from the enemy's territory and from far-off Texas.

The damages done to the railroads by the Federal cavalry raids were soon repaired, and Grant did not repeat this experiment. His own losses in horses had been severe, and possibly he had found it difficult for his cavalry to operate very far within Confederate territory where grain was scarce. But he continued his attacks on the Weldon railroad and, after several failures, at length got footing on it in August. Lee could not dislodge him; but through the energetic and resourceful efforts of Quartermaster General Lawton wagon-trains were sent around the break and supplies continued to come through from the south. But the wagons could not bring as much as the railroad had brought, and the margin above absolute destitution became perilously small. No surplus of corn could be accumulated for the coming winter. To send by railroad bulky articles like hay or fodder for the horses was out of the question. There was little grass or clover in the wooded area in which the army now lay, and, whenever the situation permitted, both artillery and cavalry horses were sent back to better pasturage.<sup>28</sup>

The most energetic efforts failed to obtain a sufficient supply of fresh horses and mules during the summer. The farmers who had

<sup>27</sup> Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Confidential Dispatches to Davis*, p. 273.

<sup>28</sup> Lee to Hampton, July 22, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XXXVII., pt. 2, p. 598; inspection report of H. E. Peyton to S. Cooper, Sept. 23, 1864, *ibid.*, v. XLII., pt. 2, pp. 1270-1278.

not been robbed of their teams during the Federal cavalry raids had barely enough left for harvesting their crops and planting their fall wheat. In those Virginia counties subject to Federal raids many farmers were without any horses at all that were fit to work, and they were now calling upon the government to supply them with others.<sup>29</sup> The schedule prices for both horses and grain as fixed by the impressment commissioners, for government purchases, in Virginia and North Carolina were so far below market prices that farmers were unwilling to part with the few horses or the scanty grain still left them, even for Lee's army. The market value of good horses and mules, fit for army use, in the summer of 1864 seems to have varied from \$1500 to \$2500 (Confederate currency); the average impressment price was \$500, except during the month of July, when it was \$1000. General T. H. Holmes, commanding in North Carolina, complained that he was obliged to pay \$4000 "for a very common one" for his personal use.<sup>30</sup> Impressment officers were directed to make an estimate of all horses and mules on each farm, not absolutely necessary to make the growing crop, and to take the surplus, seizing pleasure horses first.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Wm. A. Staples, a farmer of Bedford County, Virginia, wrote to Secretary Seddon, August 12, 1864: "Hunter's men on their late Raid stayed three days on me taking 3 Negro men all my Horses oxen fat cattle Bacon Corn Flour Sugar Coffee Molasses all Harness Saddles Bridles all our clothes breaking crockery ware. . . . I own a Farm 450 acres on the R. R. in the finest district of Bedford, work 9 hands—have 100 acres Clover to fallow for Wheat but have only two Horses & they old broken down ones I found left by the enemy. I have no money to buy Teams takes all to pay expenses & for provisions until Fall. No horses are for sale if I had money. I heard that the Gov't turn over Horses to those who lost by the enemy. I have waited until now the last moment. If you can give me an order on Maj. Paxton Q M at Lynchburg (agent for all this section has control of several thousand Govt Horses at pasture) for 3 Horses I can now fallow and seed 100 Bus. Wheat on finest land here if the Horses are good Farm Horses. No others are of any value. It would be to the interest of the Gov't. . . ." When this request was referred to Major Paxton he replied that he had no horses to spare. Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received", Confederate Archives.

<sup>30</sup> Sixteen horses taken by Hunter's men in June from Mrs. M. C. Massie, of Nelson County, were appraised, under oath, by three neighbors at an average valuation of \$1450; but several of them were evidently not fit for the army. The highest single valuation was \$2500. Massie Papers, in the University of Texas Library. For schedule of prices, see *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XL, pt. 3, pp. 766-769; v. XLII, pt. 2, pp. 1151-1155; also, Lt. Gen. T. H. Holmes to A. H. Cole, July 22, 1864, Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received", in Confederate Archives.

<sup>31</sup> "You will take pains to impress upon the citizens the urgent demand there now exists in Gen. Lee's Army, for horses and mules. There are now many Batteries of Artillery inactive for the want of horses to pull them; and entire Brigades are without the necessary teams to supply them with provisions." Jas. N. Edmonson, Inspector Field Transportation, Greensboro, N. C., to Capt. C. R. King, June 20, 1864. *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, III, 398 (Hamilton ed., Raleigh, 1920).

When the summer of 1864 had drawn to an end, more than one-fourth of the cavalymen were still dismounted and infantrymen who could procure horses were being transferred to the cavalry.<sup>32</sup> Many batteries of the field artillery were without any horses at all. These batteries were put into the defenses, but their immobility was a serious matter when a shift was necessary to meet an attack at another point. Lee called the attention of the secretary of war to the scarcity and inferiority of the artillery horses, and asked whether there was any prospect of relief. Seddon answered that the quartermaster general would endeavor to get horses from within the enemy's lines and mules from Mexico. General Lawton and Colonel A. H. Cole, inspector general of field transportation, did in fact investigate the Mexican market and learned that the prospects for a supply of mules were good, provided that a discreet and reliable agent were sent with gold or sterling exchange.<sup>33</sup> Dilatoriness either in the war department or in the treasury delayed the selection of an agent until February, 1865, when it was too late. Meanwhile there was no relief. The cavalry was so depleted by December that Longstreet advised that the men be mounted on mules. For various reasons few "recruited" animals were being returned from the horse infirmaries.

The horse and mule infirmary established in the Lynchburg region in October, 1863, had not succeeded as well as had been hoped for, but probably as well as was possible under all the circumstances. The difficulty was that no animals were sent to it until exhausted. Many of these had developed glanders and had to be killed; of the others many were too exhausted to recover. A report of the officer in charge, Major J. G. Paxton, on February 6, 1865, states that during the whole period of approximately fifteen months, he had received 6875 horses, of which only 1057 had been recruited and returned to the army, 2844 had died, 133 had been lost or stolen, 559 had been condemned and sold, 799 had been transferred to an infirmary in North Carolina, and the rest, 1483, were still unserviceable. Of mules, 2885 had been received, of which 1644 had been recruited and returned, 575 had died, a few had been sold as hopeless, and the

<sup>32</sup> Abstract from return, cavalry corps, Sept. 30, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLII., pt. 2, p. 1309; see also, Wade Hampton to Lee, Oct. 24, and Nov. 2, 1864, *ibid.*, pt. 3, pp. 1161-1162, 1198-1199.

<sup>33</sup> Lee to Seddon, Oct. 4, and Seddon to Lee, Oct. 5, 1864, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLII., pt. 3, pp. 1134, 1135-1136; Levin Lake, Meridian, Miss., to Maj. A. M. Paxton, Oct. 28, 1864, forwarded to Gen. A. R. Lawton, Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received", Confederate Archives; also, endorsements of A. R. Lawton, Nov. 11 and 13, 1864, Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received and Endorsements", XII., nos. 157, 202, Confederate Archives; and A. H. Cole to Lawton, Nov. 17, 1864, "Letters Received", *ibid.*

rest were still unrecruited.<sup>34</sup> The mules made a much better showing than the horses, for while only 15 per cent. of the horses had been returned to service, 57 per cent. of the mules had recovered. Paxton estimated that the average life of a horse in the artillery and transportation services was seven and a half months, and that a mule was five times more durable than a horse. But the mortality among artillery horses was much greater than in the transportation service and it was heavier still in the cavalry. Paxton claimed that he and his agents had purchased or impressed during the fifteen months 4929 horses and mules in Virginia at an average price of \$524.20, and that he had had great difficulty in getting the funds with which to pay for them. His estimate of the number of animals required in Lee's army and neighboring posts for artillery and transportation was 7000 horses and 14,000 mules every fifteen months. His figures can not be verified, but an estimate of the animals in all varieties of transportation service in that army on November 4, 1864, gives 1321 horses and 12,316 mules. This does not include cavalry mounts or artillery horses. By December, 1864, corn and forage for only about 1000 horses could be provided in the region about Lynchburg and to the south of it in Virginia. About 600 were quartered in northern North Carolina, and it was planned to send 1000 more into the southern part of that state until it was learned that the commissary officers claimed all the surplus grain there.<sup>35</sup> At the date of Paxton's report, February 6, 1865, more than 4000 cavalry horses from Lee's army were in infirmaries in South Carolina, mostly in Lancaster County.

When the winter of 1864 closed down on Lee's army the familiar difficulties of finding food and forage were infinitely worse than ever. The Shenandoah Valley, devastated by Sheridan, could furnish nothing, and horses there were dying of starvation by hundreds on the farms. All the country within reach of the army was swept bare of supplies. Since the currency was worthless, the purchasing officers and agents could not buy provisions with it and were forced to resort to barter or impressment; but the country along the railroads had already been combed and the scarcity there was so extreme that not even coin could have procured enough food for the army. Nor could the worn and crippled railroads have brought enough if there had been no scarcity in the Carolinas. The men were on one-fourth

<sup>34</sup> This report is in manuscript among the Personal Papers of Jas. G. Paxton, Confederate Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Summary statement in Personal Papers of Major George Johnston, Confederate Archives. Johnston was chief inspector of field transportation at Richmond. J. G. Paxton to Q. M. G. O., "Letters Received", Confederate Archives. The letter is undated but is found with others of December, 1864.



rations and some days had none at all. The winter was extremely severe upon both men and animals. The hungry and half-frozen men were deserting in large numbers; but the famished horses could only die unless removed. In January, Lee had to diminish his cavalry still further by sending Butler's division to South Carolina to get fresh horses which were to be collected by the government.<sup>36</sup> General Hampton also went down to superintend recruiting. Neither he nor Butler's division ever returned to Lee, for they were retained to operate against Sherman.<sup>37</sup> Unserviceable cavalry horses to the number of 2700 were sent to the same state at about the same time to be foraged; but they had to be scattered over a wide territory far back from the railroads where the tithe-gathering officers did not operate zealously. Lee had now only two weak divisions of cavalry with his army. In order to procure forage, the greater part of W. H. F. Lee's division had to be sent forty miles away, by the roads, to Stony Creek, beyond the gap in the Weldon railroad on the south. Here the horses were kept in fair condition; but they were too far away to be of use in emergencies, and they could not be fed when brought up to the army. Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, on the left flank and north of the James, was farther from supplies, and the horses were in such bad condition that they were unfit for hard service. The artillery animals were sent back, only a few being left with the guns. The men of some of the field batteries were sent to the heavy guns in the fortifications because their own batteries could not be supplied with horses.<sup>38</sup> Because of the weakness of the cavalry which guarded his flanks, Lee was obliged to extend his already too thin lines. In the face of an active and aggressive enemy this was dangerous business, but there was nothing else to do. He saw clearly what was in store for him, and repeatedly pointed out that he could not continue to hold Richmond without more men and horses and food. The government, however, was really helpless. The pur-

<sup>36</sup> M. G. Harman to R. M. T. Hunter and A. T. Caperton, Jan. 17, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 2, p. 1110. Lee to Seddon, Jan. 11, *ibid.*, p. 1035. Lee to Cooper, Jan. 19, *ibid.*, p. 1100; also "Special Orders, no. 8" [Hampton's], *ibid.*, p. 1101.

<sup>37</sup> General Hampton failed to procure sufficient funds for the horses he needed; and on February 2, the presidents of eight state banks met at Columbia in the office of Governor Magrath and agreed to advance to the state \$1,000,000 for the purchase of horses for Hampton. Printed circular agreement in "South Carolina: Letters Received by the Governor", Confederate Archives.

<sup>38</sup> J. G. Paxton to A. R. Lawton, Jan. 27, 1865, "Personal Papers of Jas. G. Paxton", Confederate Archives. Inspection report of Maj. Geo. Frenner, March 1, 1865, MS. in Confederate Archives. W. N. Pendleton to T. H. Carter, Jan. 17, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 2, pp. 1083-1084. Pendleton to W. H. Taylor, March 18, 1865, *ibid.*, pt. 3, pp. 1322-1324.

chasing officers had to contend not only with an actual scarcity of supplies but also with a collapsed currency which paralyzed every effort.

It was now proposed to change the law which required the cavalrymen to furnish their own mounts. One evil in the existing system was that whenever a man was dismounted he had to be furloughed home in order to find another horse. In consequence, many men were long absent from service when needed at the front. In order to get the cherished furloughs some of the homesick men deliberately disabled their own horses. With the approval of the officers most concerned with the problem, a bill was introduced into the Confederate Congress on December 29, 1864, to require the quartermaster general to provide horses for dismounted cavalymen and to purchase the horses of any cavalry unit upon recommendation of the general commanding in the field.<sup>39</sup> The bill passed both houses on February 14 and was approved by Jefferson Davis on February 23. It is doubtful whether it was ever put into effect at all; but at that late day it could not have relieved the situation to any appreciable extent.

If the prospect for fresh horses had been bad in the early winter, it was desperate by the end of January. General Pendleton, chief of artillery, suggested that the unserviceable horses be turned over to the farmers in return for good horses impressed. This would save the scanty stock of forage in the recruiting depots. "The question of our horse supply", he said, "is hardly second to that of supplying men for the army, or food for the men."<sup>40</sup> Major A. H. Cole, who was charged with the duty of providing horses and mules for artillery and transportation service for all the armies east of the Mississippi, had been making estimates of the number of animals that would be required and canvassing the means of procuring them. In two communications to General Lawton, written the same day, February 1, he reviewed the situation. He estimated that the armies would require for the spring service some 6000 additional horses and 4500 mules. The number to be had by impressment would depend upon how many could be taken safely from agriculture. Evidently Cole thought that no more could be taken from that source, for, as already stated, he suggested that all should be procured from within the enemy's lines and from Mexico. He thought that 5000 could be got

<sup>39</sup> A. H. Cole to A. R. Lawton, December 24, 1864. Quartm. Gen.'s "Letters Received", Confederate Archives. *Journals of the Confederate Congress*, vol. 7 (House Journal), 400, 419, 513, 543-544, 577, 650; vol. 4 (Senate Journal), 498-499, 544. The law was never officially printed and portions only appear in the *Journals*.

<sup>40</sup> W. N. Pendleton to A. H. Cole, Feb. 7, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 2, p. 1208.

from regions occupied by the Federals east of the Mississippi—3000 from within Mississippi and 2000 from Virginia and North Carolina. In the last two states gold or United States currency would be necessary; and prices would range from \$60 in gold for first class, to \$40 for second class, animals. In Mississippi cotton must be furnished the purchasing agents at the rate of 600 pounds for first class horses, and the agents must be allowed to work without interference from the treasury officials. Gold or sterling exchange would be essential in Mexico. Some exchange had been furnished in December, but the failure to appoint a suitable agent had made it useless.<sup>41</sup>

On February 14, Cole estimated that the calls for horses and mules for *immediate* service in Virginia and North Carolina alone aggregated 3200 horses and 2400 mules. At the same time he was expected to furnish 2650 animals for the forces gathering in the Carolinas to oppose the northward march of Sherman. There was no time to look beyond the Mississippi. There was no other recourse but to impress from the scanty supply of the farmers, for which \$3,000,000 in currency was necessary at once, and to purchase from across the lines, for which \$100,000 in gold was essential. The attitude of the farmers as well as that of the state officials made impressment a failure. A week later Cole advised Lee that he was getting no animals whatever for the army for the reason that he had received no gold from the treasury. When General Lee suggested that the government convert its cotton and tobacco into gold for this purpose, the secretary of the treasury insisted that the effort had been made to do so and promised that it would be continued. The government had now, however, been reduced to the slow process of barter and was really unable to act promptly. The only evidence found that any of the gold was ever furnished is an order of Cole, on March 7, turning over \$2000 in coin to a bonded agent for the purchase of animals within the enemy's lines.<sup>42</sup>

No evidence has been found that Lee ever received any of the horses he called for in February and March. Again and again he called the attention of the secretary of war to his perilous situation and begged for food and forage for the army. In his famous letter of March 9 in which he reviewed the military situation with vivid frankness, he said:

<sup>41</sup> *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. LXVI., pt. 2, pp. 1190-1191; also, *ibid.*, ser. IV. v. III. 1087-1089.

<sup>42</sup> A. H. Cole to Lawton, Feb. 14, and Cole to Col. Corley, with endorsements, Feb. 20, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 2, pp. 1232-1233, 1242-1243. Order Book of A. H. Cole, Inspector General of Field Transportation, p. 48, Confederate Archives.

Unless the men and animals can be subsisted, the army cannot be kept together, and our present lines must be abandoned. Nor can it be moved to any other position where it can operate to advantage without provisions to enable it to move in a body.<sup>43</sup>

Although he knew that Grant was preparing to turn his right at Hatcher's Run, he still had to keep his little cavalry force on that wing down at Stony Creek, miles away, because he could not subsist it at the danger point. Late in March Pendleton found it impossible to bring up the horses for the artillery because they could not be fed, and reported that the artillery must be reduced because of the lack of horses.<sup>44</sup> When a few days later Sheridan's heavy force crashed through the weak Confederate right flank at Five Forks, there was only a small cavalry force left to oppose him. Lee later attributed the disaster in part to the absence of the cavalry units which had been sent to the interior to winter their horses and had not rejoined the army.<sup>45</sup>

With his flank turned and his remaining communications about to be cut, Lee began at once the withdrawal which he had long foreseen must be made. It would have been a difficult operation with his animals in good condition; but now at the end of a severe winter when they were weak and slow from exposure and starvation it was a desperate undertaking. Only the stronger teams were able to take out wagon trains and guns, and on the forced marches without food they soon broke down. The cavalry could not keep pace with the better horses of Sheridan. At the end of a week what was left of a proud army was surrounded and the long struggle was over.

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<sup>43</sup> Lee to Breckenridge, March 9, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 2, p. 1295.

<sup>44</sup> Pendleton to W. H. Taylor, March 18, Pendleton to Chew, March 20, 1865, *Offic. Rec.*, ser. I. v. XLVI., pt. 3, pp. 1322, 1327.

<sup>45</sup> "The absence of the troops which I had sent to North and South Carolina, was I believe, the cause of our immediate disaster. Our small force of cavalry (a large portion of the men, who had been sent to the interior to winter their horses, had not rejoined their regiments,) was unable to resist the united Federal Cavalry, under Sheridan, which obliged me to detach Pickett's Division to Fitz Lee's support, thereby weakening my main line, and yet not accomplishing my purpose. If you had been there with all of our cavalry, the result at Five Forks would have been different. But how long the contest would have been prolonged, it is difficult to say. . . ." R. E. Lee to Wade Hampton, August 1, 1865, printed in Wade Hampton, *Address on the Life and Character of Gen. Robert E. Lee*, etc., p. 45 (Baltimore, 1871).